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9/14/71

Mr. Julian Goodman, President
National Broadcasting Co.
Rockefeller Center
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Goodman,

You hear criticism often enough, including from me. Therefore, I take time out from a longer day than I think you can conceive an aging, 58-year old writer can continue to work for sincere praise for the first hour of Today, a credit to you and those who conceived and produced it.

That it fell far short of what it could have been does not diminish its importance in the context of our day and our times, for it reached millions of people with what they must understand and consider if representative society is to function. To this I add another opinion you may not be as willing to believe, if our land is not to burn.

The bureaucratic necessities of modern TV reporting, the shibboleths and the unfortunately unavoidable detachment of modern reporters from the realities of so much of modern life made these defects unavoidable. I do hope you will consider two things: that Attica and Soledad and San Quentin are not the end but more likely a beginning; and that NBC could have been better prepared for them, as it can be for what I think you will soon enough find inevitable. I write this while the rest of Today is still on, and I risk my reputation as a prophet to predict that before night you will be reporting other prison riots, not of this magnitude, but what my own experiences of the last seven years of unrewarding work have led me to believe is inevitable.

In part because your people could not really have been prepared for this morning's show do I think it is an achievement of which you can be proud. If experience leads me to believe you will do nothing to prepare yourself, I waste time I do not have in the hope that, like everything else in life, NBC can change.

Although his presentation was excellent, even Hunstler fell short of presenting the basic issue, which is not prisons or the horros of modern prisons. He fell short in his emotional truth, that we must (all) come to realize that "human beings are behind these walls", for what must go with this truth is the question how they got there. Closer was the legislator Dunne, who said this is not a prison problem but a human problem.

We are far past the point where the questions we must answer, or to which we must find answers, can be posed as those of prisons or prison life. Likewise are we past the point where we can pretend the militancy of prison populations can be attributed to the presence in jails of militants. Jails today radicalize. They make militants. They are factories for the production of Spartacuses. Survival permits little choice for the inmate who will not submit to dehumanization, and the conditions of all jails leaves little choice to guards other than tyranny and abuses. And what do both mean for society?

We are far past the point that is central in my own investigations and writings the suppression and ignoring of which have become a fact of NBC life. The question, as it relates to what happened in Attica, as in California, is not prisons or prison life but of justice, which has become a non-racial impossibility in this land.

There is still racial injustice, and unintentionally you limned it this morning. But it is not only racial. There were several references to Angela Davis. You might find it illuminating to have a bit of research done into the "establishmentarian" support she now has. And she is a Communist, as callers prompted Downs to ad lib. But the sickness of society is in two obvious ways illustrated by her case. She was fired for being an admitted Communist, by the same State that did not fire the more prominent and much more influential "radical", Herbert Marcuse, who was her teacher and mentor. He is white, she black. And the case against her is so shocking that even the USIA's propaganda in defense of government cannot avoid this. It is no case at all. It is something for which you could as easily be charged and for which there cannot be proof. If you have a weapon that is, let us say, taken without your assent and used in a crime in which people are killed, you also can be charged as she has been. And if you have been a decent citizen, as I have been, and voluntarily registered your weapons with your police, you automatically finger yourself.

I learned of this USIA propaganda, which actually spells out to the careful reader how she is really being framed, by accident. The august New York Times Book Review, which had ignored all my earlier books (NBC has no monopoly), in this case found none of its competent staff, least of all the excellent reporter, Martin Waldron, who had reported the "trial" of James Earl Ray, fit to "review" my book on that case and the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. And of all the lawyers they could have sought out, they reached all the way accross the country for a man who, while simultaneously writing this USIA propaganda, also had a clear record of a) having made himself my enemy and b) unthinking sycophancy in support of all the official mythology about the political assassinations. He was not disqualified, not for the Times in so noble a purpose, in his earlier career, which included having been the law clark of the Supreme Court Justice whose son was the Attorney General under which all I expose happened (and who will yet come to understand that he is one of the victims). Nor, among other things, was he disqualified by long service in the Department of Justice and as the former associate and friend of those really responsible for what really is the framing of Ray and with him of history and justice. An outraged correspondent from a different country sent this USIA propaganda to me after he got it and had read my book.

The Angela Davis case is but one of those that are radicalizing most of the blacks and a fair proportion of white youth. It includes intellectuals of both races. I have met with and talked with enough of them, of several generations, to know this to be true. Sam Greenlee's novel, The Spook Who Sat By the Door, may well be regarded as a work of non-fiction. If you could but meet with them on a basis of trust as I have, I think this permeating attitude would stun you. Most black thinkers today will, if they trust you, tell you that they believe justice has become impossible. Some will go further and tell you, as they began telling me two years ago, that guerrilla warfare will be our way of life within 10 years. I think we are now in its earlier stages. I disagree with them only in thinking it will not be from the left alone. My own work proves it had already begun from the right, without any interference from the federal government or most State governments and with what can without real exaggeration be considered the silent collaboration of Hoover and the FBI.

If, as I of course hope in taking time I do not have to write you, you will read this letter, you will understand that it is spontaneous and necessarily not properly organized. The foregoing thought leads me to something I have just written in a book on which I am working, the recent pronouncements of the Chief Justice and the Attorney General as they describe the open and unabashed federal intent to rewrite the Constitution to eliminate the protections that, if denied one, are denied all. These protections have become "frills", no more, and the Consttitution right of the accused only to a speedy trial is being translated into the inalienable right of the prosecution. Can you conceive of the radicalization and the new and added violence this will cause? Especially when it has become the custom to make up a number of untenable charges to add to each indictment, especially of the poor, not all of whom are black, to persuade him to plead guilty instead of standing trial, a perfect machine for the railroading of the innocent accused into jail.

Earlier I referred to the beginning of guerrilla warfare by the extremists of the right. I have given someone at NBC a copy of a minor but more comprehensible example of this, how the right arranged for the explosion at the Wilkerson Grenich Village home in which the left was making bombs. I have had the literature of the right on this kind of thing for years, including the detailed and scientifically perfect handbooks of the Minutemen. They make the Anarchist's Cookbook look like a recipe for crepes suzette. And I have file after file of samples from many sources, some of whom had access to and reprinted classified government handbooks. Although I have given it to a police agency with which I work, I can get you the classified Viet Cong handbook on booby-traps and such devices that the Minutemen got from someone in the Army. This is the kind of thing that has been used against blacks for years. They thus feel that the alternative to remaining mute and continuing to tolerate the intolerable is to radicalize and to prepare for and practice violence against these dangerous and murderous nuts as well as against the organs of society.

The degree to which justice has become impossible and the degree to which blacks are persuaded of this is one of the things that can still shock me and has, despite the kind of work (I think you may remember) that I have been doing for years. In Memphis, for example, where I could not go until after my book had been printed, I found no single black man willing to believe that James Earl Ray really did shoot Dr. King! All they needed to know was the conditions of their life, the kind of "justice" it holds for them. Some of them spelled this out in simple language: if the police accused him he had to be innocent!

And there, what preceded the assassination, also radicalized the non-militant blacks. Who I am and what I had written soon spread through the motel in which I worked and lived, in somewhat exaggerated form. I found middle-aged blacks seeking me out to explain to me that while their lives to then had been dominated by fear, the conditions that led to that strike, the official attitude toward it and the inchoate violence set off by frustrated youth had made them come to believe that for them there remains no alternative to violence. And this is the opinion of those relatively well off, with better jobs than they had in their earlier days considered they could ever have.

While I was in Memphis I sat through the "hearing" to determine whether there would be a hearing that in turn could determine whether Ray could have an evidentiary hearing, such is the complexity of the law and the quest for justice. It was a sorry sham in which the judge had already made up his mind and had his half-hour long "decision" prepared in advance (I have the transcript and a not-illicit tape of his delivery of it). Prior to that he cleared the docket. There must have been more than two dozen identical cases, all involving young blacks. As each was called the judge asked a simple question, "Double jeopardy?" The rprosecutor said, "Yes, your Honor", and the judge in each case assessed a $50 fine, as I recall, and it was all over. Now in each of these cases it was triple jeopardy, until then legal, where each of this young blacks had thrice been charged with a single offense, in each case carrying a pistol! Not one case of using it - just having it in case he felt he needed it. And each element of government, it seemed, charged him with the one offense, one of the better ways of loading the jails with the most militant who are made more militant anf who in turn proselytize.

I could go on and on, but neither of us has time for it. Part of the root cause is the failure of the media, in my belief, to adequately (if at all) report some of the causes, to expose injustices, to report what can lead to the necessary changes in society. You people are hung up on the political assassinations and when you have aired anything have sought out the least informed and the most irresponsible. And you have been crusaders- for one and the wrong side, that of government and erring government. But why not get one of your many researchers to give you the crime statistics (and perhaps those on dope) beginning with the assassination of John Kennedy. I know from my frequent contracts with the (mostly white) young the despair they felt over the inadequacy and unacceptability of the official mythology all you fat cats called beautiful raiment, like those of the fabled emperor. Or think for a moment of the cash cost alone of the unprompted violence that was the immediate reaction to the King assassination. (I digress to suggest that you will, if you dig deeply enough,

find that the San Francisco Bay charges against Panthers and what I believe is the murder of one stem from police interference in an effort to prevent their attempt to cool black passions at that time.)

So I do praise you and you are entitled to praise for what you did this morning, and all those who had to have worked so much during sleeping time to make it possible also deserve praise. When I compare this fine journalism with the vicious attack on Tom Wicker, who was a brave man to go to Attica when the prisoners asked it and an honest man in saying what he believed, aired by WMAL-TV last night, then you look even better.

But praise is not enough. Especially the executives of the major media have responsibilities they have more than shed - they have ordered not be met. For my part, although I am broke and in debt and there is no possibility of profit to me, I have undertaken to background and inform an unwilling media of what impends. That I was right is not my point. That it would do nothing is. I cite you one example of how far you have strayed from the once-traditional path of American journalism. It is now about nine months since I showed a man in responsible position with NBC news proof of what has since become fact and public in the assassination of Robert Kennedy. From the first of the year until July you <u>would</u> do nothing. Then you did nothing. And I have no book on the Robert Kennedy assassination to be promoted.

Justice is not an abstraction. Least of all is it for the frustrated for whom it has become impossible - or at least most of them believe it is impossible, and the distinction is meaningless. All of my books -all suppressed by you - document this. I should say began to document this before it became the national problem it now is. There is a documentation of this in FRAME-UP I challenge you to equal - or refute. And I papered NBC with copies - including copies I had to buy to give you.

You and your stations have aired the other side. Need I remind you of the attention you and your stations gave Foreman, Huie and Hanes, at the time of the prostitution of justice in Memphis and at the time of the LOOK articles. Where I asked for fairness-doctrine time - and where NBC personnel recommended it - I was denied it. That book is dead. You are one of its assassins. I am not asking for time, nor am I asking for time to promote a corpse.

I am asking that the country not die- or burn more than it has. And this means that the major media must assume its responsibilities as it has not and as it has refused to.

If you have the courage to undertake courageous investigative reporting one of the by-products might be to tell the disenchanted that there may still be hope, I think I can help you break the Rap Brown bombing case (and I certainly am not a partisan here). Had I the time and facilities, I am confident I could do it alone -even acting as my own lawyer should this be necessary.

In any event, in the interest of history and of Tom Wicker, against whom there may yet be a larger campaign, I do hope you will see to it that the remaining outtakes, especially audio, where your costs would be slight, are preserved. And if you make a transcript of this morning's show, I'd appreciate a copy and permission to quote, should I later desire to, in future writing should I address this subject.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg